



St Raphael Church

525 Dover Center

Bay Village, Ohio 44140

Phone 440.871.1100 Fax: 440.899.2911

www.saintraphaelparish.com

My dear friends in Christ,

Fr. Eric, our parish staff, and I have been waiting a long time to write this letter to you. Mass will be celebrated publicly beginning Tuesday, May 26th at 9:15am! Our first **weekend** to celebrate Mass publicly will be on the Feast of Pentecost when we celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit and the birthday of our Church! The Weekend Mass times will remain the same: 4:30pm Saturday and 8:00am, 10:00am, and 12:00pm on Sunday.

While there is tremendous excitement for all of us, we will be implementing the necessary precautions to keep everyone as safe as possible. There are lists of numerous Diocesan and State requirements that we must implement and adhere to for everyone's safety.

Please note, the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains in effect. With deep concern, I want to address our elderly brothers and sisters; those with a weakened immune system; those suffering from respiratory issues; or other preexisting conditions that would place you in any danger of the COVID 19 Virus: **If there is any question about your ability to attend Mass publicly, please consult your physician before you make the decision to come and worship with us.** Remember, all the Masses will be livestreamed so you can still be an integral part of the celebration in your home.

One of the mandates handed down to us is that we must limit our occupancy in the church to one half. If we reach fifty percent occupancy in the church, we will have space available in the Parish Activity Center where the Mass will be livestreamed and Holy Communion will be distributed at the appropriate time.

Our parish has many funerals and memorial Masses pending since they could not be celebrated during the shutdown. Because of the numerous funerals and upcoming weddings, I have decided not to have the 8:30am Saturday morning Mass until after Labor Day. We will revisit the possibility at that time. We assure you that the intentions for those liturgies will be honored by retired priests in the area or by Fr. Tim and Fr. Eric at a private Mass. One Mass will be celebrated at 9:15am each morning during the week, much like we have done over these past two months. Our plan is to implement this through Labor Day. There will be no 7:45am Mass during the week. The intentions for the 7:45am Mass will be remembered by the concelebrating priest at the 9:15am Mass. We will continue to livestream the 9:15am Mass during the week.

We continue the work of the Lord.

Here are the guidelines that have been implemented here at St. Raphael:

BEFORE MASS

- Please plan to arrive at Mass fifteen minutes early so that we can properly navigate social distancing and placement of our parishioners in the pews. Seating for the next Mass will not begin until sanitation is complete.
- Please check your temperature before Mass. A temperature over 100.4 or if you exhibit any of the symptoms of COVID-19 requires that you stay home.
- Masks are REQUIRED. According to CDC guidelines, masks should not be placed on children under the age of 2, but are recommended for children age 3 and older.
- Maintain a 6-foot distance upon entering the church building
- Hand sanitizer will be available at all entrances of the church
- Every other pew will be available for occupancy
- Each parishioner or family unit will be escorted to a specific pew
- Maintain a 6 feet distance between each parishioner in each pew (family units and couples may sit together)
- No hymnals, books or other materials will be in the pew. You may bring your own missal for use during the Mass.
- Holy water fonts and the Baptismal Font will be empty

DURING MASS

- The Quietening Room will NOT be available until further notice
- Littlest Angels childcare has been suspended until further notice
- The ministry of the Altar Servers, Lectors, Eucharistic Ministers and Sacristans will NOT be exercised until further notice.
- Offertory processions are suspended
- There will NOT be an offertory collection. Baskets for envelopes will be at the entrances of the church for reception at both the beginning and end of Mass.
- The sign of Peace will be omitted until further notice
- For the health and safety of all, reception of Holy Communion is strongly encouraged in the hand to avoid contact with individual's saliva
- There will NOT be distribution of Holy Communion from the Chalice or Communion cup
- Holy Communion will be brought to you as you remain in your pew. The priests and deacons will distribute from the empty pew in front of you. If you wish to receive Holy Communion, just remain standing with your hand open and mask down for the reception of Holy Communion. After responding "Amen," the communicant reverently places the Eucharist in his or her mouth and immediately covers their nose and mouth with the mask.
- Those not wishing to receive Holy Communion, place your hand over your heart to receive a special blessing.

- Those who will be bringing Holy Communion to the homebound should open your pyx, after receiving Holy Communion, and let the minister know how many hosts you will be needing
- After the final blessing, ushers will dismiss by rows and sections. Please continue to maintain the 6-foot distance protocol while exiting the building

AFTER MASS

- Clergy will NOT be greeting after Mass
- Coffee and doughnuts will NOT be available
- Bulletins will be available at each exit for parishioners to take home
- Following each Mass, the entire church, including restrooms and high traffic areas, will be sanitized. If used, the PAC will also be included in this process.

As you can see, great thought and care have gone into these guidelines so that the safety of our people is not compromised. Mass will look different and feel different for a period of time but we will worship with great fortitude, hope and love.

A note on the Sacrament of Confession: Fr. Eric will hear confessions in the Quieting Room and Fr. Tim will hear confessions in the Franciscan Chapel, so that proper social distancing can take place. The floor will be marked outside each of the areas for confessions keeping to the 6-foot distancing policy. Confessions will be held at the usual time on Saturdays from 3:00pm to 4:00pm, beginning June 6th. If someone would need to make an appointment for the reception of Confession, please call the Parish Office.

Baptisms will continue to be held on the second, third, and fourth Sundays of the month at 2:00pm beginning June 14th.

Eucharistic Adoration remains suspended until further notice, but the church will be open for personal prayer on weekdays from 11:00am until 7:00pm.

I know that this is a lot of information to digest. We are doing the very best we can to keep all of us safe and connected to the Lord and to each other. I hope and pray that the gradual unfolding of the process of reentry will quickly lead to a fuller inclusion of the ministers and ministries in the celebration of Mass. In the meantime, I ask for your patient understanding and cooperation. Keep all affected by this virus in your prayers. As we move forward, we do so in hope and prayer that our Lord will continue to guide us and bless us through this transition period.

We have a beautiful, resilient, faith community. We are rooted in the Gospel message, excited for worship, and longing for nourishment in the reception of Holy Communion.

We will get through this time ignited by our love for the Lord and our compassion for each other. We will be well-prepared. And we will navigate through this together.

As I stated at the beginning of this letter, our first weekend that we will publicly celebrate Mass in our Church is on the Feast of Pentecost. Let us draw great strength from the presence of the Holy Spirit. May we be renewed, refreshed, and empowered to live in His grace and love.

God bless and keep you,

Fr. Timothy W. Gareau

Fr. Eric S. Garris